

CLAIMS

1. Use of propionibacteria to produce an absorbable common food composition or an absorbable dietary or medicinal composition which is capable of releasing physiologically significant amounts of nitric oxide into the human or animal digestive tract.
2. Use according to Claim 1, characterized in that the composition consists of a dehydrated preparation.
3. Use according to Claim 2, characterized in that the composition is in the form of individual fractions containing the dose of bacteria which needs to be regularly absorbed.
4. Use according to Claim 3, characterized in that each individual fraction contains more than  $10^9$  bacteria.
5. Use according to Claim 1, characterized in that the composition consists of a fermented or unfermented liquid preparation.
6. Use according to Claim 1, characterized in that the composition is an elaborate preparation, the propionibacteria being added or incorporated into foods such as cheeses or dietary fiber.
7. Absorbable dietary or medicinal composition, characterized in that it consists of a preparation containing a large amount, preferably more than  $10^9$  cells/g, of strains of propionibacteria selected as a function of their ability to release and/or to accumulate nitric oxide, in a proportion of at least 1  $\mu\text{g/ml}$  of YEL medium containing 550  $\mu\text{M}$  nitrate.
8. Composition according to Claim 7, characterized in that it contains propionibacteria belonging to at least one of the strains TL223, CNRZ80, CNRZ86 and NCD01072 of the species *P. acidipropionici*.
9. Composition according to Claim 8, characterized in that it contains propionibacteria belonging to the strain TL223 of the species *P. acidipropionici*.

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10. Composition according to Claim 8, characterized in that it contains propionibacteria belonging to the strain CNRZ80.
11. Composition according to Claim 7, characterized in that it contains propionibacteria belonging to at least one of the strains ITG23, CNRZ81, CNRZ89, CNRZ277 and LS2502 of the species *P. freudenreichii*.
12. Composition according to ~~any one of Claims 7 to 11~~ <sup>claim 7</sup>, characterized in that it also contains other bacteria, such as bifidobacteria and/or lactic acid bacteria.

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